



CINDY LYNESSE / THE HUMAN FACTOR

Keep talented workers at your company

If you've been following Eastern Iowa business news over the past few months, you know that the job market is heating up. The labor market is rebounding.

While many people are celebrating this change, business leaders may need to also evaluate what this means for their company's talent pool. As they attempt to add new talent, is their existing talent vulnerable?

Whenever a job market improves, executives should be aware that their most talented employees and managers may begin to explore other opportunities. If business leaders aren't worried about talent retention, they should be.

In a nutshell, more jobs mean more opportunities, especially for the best and brightest workers — precisely the ones you don't want to lose. So what is a business leader to do if he or she already employs the best and the brightest?

Your most talented and productive employees are attracted by money, but they seldom stay for money.

Yes, they need to be paid well relative to the value they produce, but they need more than money if expectations are for a long-term, productive relationship. They are looking for growth-oriented environments that provide frequent opportunities for success.

And most importantly, those successes must be recognized in a genuine way.

Regardless of whether the organization is large or small, the ones that will be most successful at retaining their top talent will be those that recognize a few key principles.

First, they must be aware of the paradox of success: The same qualities that got you

where you are will not take you into the future. This is because the world you're entering is no longer the world you came from.

The business leader himself must be growing personally, as well as in the way he orchestrates the work of others.

Success is not only about the growth of your business, but also the growth of your people. For your top performers, growth is satisfying and fulfilling. They want to try new things or experiment with new ways of doing their existing tasks.

This leads to another key principle: Be clear about your definition of success. Does your company's definition of success include success for everyone in the organization? If not, retaining your most productive people will become a challenge.

Third, it is very important to

create a safe space where success can occur. Those at the executive level should think about how to remove "right and wrong" or "good and bad" from the culture. The question simply becomes, "Is it working?" If so, how do we continue?

The leader who takes the time to refocus and put these few simple principles into practice may begin to see the effects of a healthier corporate culture.

This results in an environment where there is collaboration instead of competition, growth instead of merely survival and a focus on growing people instead of growing only the business. With this as your work environment, why go anywhere else?

► *Cindy Lyness is owner and managing partner of MRI of Cedar Rapids, a franchise of Management Recruiters International, an executive search firm. She can be reached at clyness@mricr.com*

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